

Date: Mon, 5 Apr 1999 11:50:32 +0000

Subject: Bread Ties in Edinburgh

Dr. N. Elliot, DPS

As a resident of Edinburgh I can add to the information acquired by your field researcher concerning bread ties in this area of the world.

Although I have not recorded any of these peculiar organisms in Edinburgh recently, I can state that they were present here in abundance until a number of years ago, prior to becoming suddenly and completely extinct. As your researcher noted, bread products here are now generally found in association with small pieces of coloured sticky tape. As these rather dull organisms appear to be occupying an almost identical ecological niche to that previously occupied by bread ties, it is likely that they represent a non-native invasive species, possibly introduced into Britain via an imported product. As bread has a very short life cycle and bread ties seem to have no independent method of dispersal, it is likely that this was a non-perishable product other than fresh bread.

Bread ties in Edinburgh never showed the diversity present in American species. As far as I can remember, only one or two species occurred, probably representing either order Acutignatha or Archignatha. (Acutignathales and Archignathales, to use the conventional ordinal form).

Those involved in Plasticae conservation in the U.S. will hopefully learn from the ecological disaster which has occurred in Britain. It would be tragic if the diverse American bread tie fauna were to suffer a similar fate.

N. Elliot.

P.S. A study conducted by myself a number of years ago here in Edinburgh confirmed the symbiotic relationship between bread and bread ties. Bread products without a bread tie associate were seen to suffer from premature hardening and fungal infection.